

The Christian News-Letter

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Edited by
KATHLEEN BLISS

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DEAR MEMBER,

We wish all our members a *good* New Year. To do this with sincerity and real meaning demands faith. The sky is dark and the future uncertain. The long war is over, and men and women are returning to their homes and picking up the broken threads of their work. The killing, the destruction, the suspense, the expectation of bad news, the discomfort of the black-out, the misery of the prisoners—all these are gone, and thankfulness for these deliverances may well colour the year ahead. But as perhaps we foresaw and now perceive only too clearly, victory is exacting from us a continuing price. We have to go on living in the kind of world which we made in order to obtain victory. Above all, the future of the human race is overshadowed by the deadly menace of the atomic bomb. The year 1946 is the first in human history in which mankind finds itself equipped with a power to compass in a single day its own almost total destruction.

THE NEW ERA

There is a sense in which the discovery of the means of nuclear fission is no more than a further step in the long process in which in recent centuries men have set themselves to explore the secrets of the universe and control for their own purposes its resources. The problems in international relations which the atomic bomb compels us to face were not created by the discovery of atomic bombs: they have only been made more acute and urgent.

The release of nuclear energy represents, from one point of view, no more than a vast increase in men's power to exploit nature and coerce their fellow-men. But a difference of degree may be of such dimensions as to make it a difference in kind. In writing about the release of atomic energy we are not thinking of it as an isolated event, but as the symbol of the forces which science is putting into human hands, and the precursor in all probability of developments and discoveries hardly less staggering.

It is too early to forecast the changes which atomic power may bring about in the external conditions of human life. Those who are in the best position to know assure us that it will be several,

perhaps many years before nuclear energy becomes a serious competitor with other forms of power for industrial purposes. Nothing that has so far been discovered justifies the expectation that it can be used directly as a source of industrial power. It may be used to generate electricity, but not at present cheaply. On the other hand, competent authorities have no doubt that in time atomic energy will for many purposes take the place of existing sources of power and banish all fear of what will happen when the supplies of coal and oil become exhausted. In view of these ultimate possibilities, all the leading countries, including our own, are making provision for fundamental research on a large scale. But for the next five or ten years atomic energy means for all practical purposes destructive energy.

About these destructive possibilities of atomic energy there is unhappily no question. The explosive power of the first atomic bomb will soon be increased a hundredfold. A leading scientist in this country has said that in a quarter of an hour of the declaration of war—if there is a declaration of war—all the leading cities of an attacked nation will be in ruins. The director of atomic research in New Mexico told a committee of the American Senate that a single air-raid, using bombs in their present stage of development, could kill forty million people. Another leading scientist informed the same committee that it would be possible in ten or twenty years' time for a hostile nation by simply pressing a button to wipe out not only American cities, but every man, woman and child in the United States.

THE EFFECT ON MEN'S MINDS

What effect may the stupendous enhancement of the power to destroy be expected to have on men's outlook and attitude?

Some are inclined to the view that it will bring about no fundamental change. The same things, they argue, that are now said about the atomic bomb might have been said about area bombing, if it could have been foreseen. This is to get things the wrong way round. If there is a relation between the bombing of Germany and the bombing of Hiroshima, it is the former that has to be assimilated in our thought to the latter, and not *vice versa*. The possibility that the greater part of mankind may be wiped out of existence in this generation changes the whole of our perspective.

One of the chief dangers which we face is that when the knowledge of these possibilities comes home to us, some may become the victims of an enervating despair. Why should we give ourselves whole-heartedly, they will be tempted to ask, to any enterprise, when the end of everything may come in ten years? What sense is

there in moral sanctions intended to buttress an enduring society if the present moment alone is ours ?

The danger of universal destruction is real. It is particularly significant that those who know most are the most alarmed and the most alarming. Seldom has a group been more vocal or more determined that its views shall be heard than the scientists in America engaged in atomic research. Both in America and in this country physicists connected with research have declared that if the Governments do not take the precautions necessary to prevent catastrophe, they are ready to go to prison for telling the world what they know.

We are living in apocalyptic times, and it is the scientists who are using the language of apocalypse. At a recent meeting under the auspices of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, Sir Richard Gregory quoted the passage from the second Epistle of St. Peter, which speaks of the day of the Lord coming as a thief, "in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up." Those who live in the presence of such contingencies may be expected to develop a fundamentally different attitude to life from that of an age in which the prevailing belief was in assured and orderly progress, "where freedom slowly broadens down from precedent to precedent." The knowledge possessed by those who live in daily contact with the potentialities of the atom has not yet penetrated deeply into the consciousness of the ordinary man. When it does, it is likely to produce far-reaching changes in his emotional life.

Mgr. Ronald Knox, in his little book *God and the Atom*,¹ has suggested one of the ways in which the release of nuclear energy may affect certain natures. "Here in the atom," they may say, "there is an energy engaged in holding it together, and its liberation is the characteristic triumph of the new age. Is there not also in me a prodigious force exercised in the dull tame business of keeping my own impulses in check ? Must I not set myself to liberate this force of will, so as to fulfil a positive, not merely a negative function ? Instead of hampering me in the achievement of my ends, it must be trained to form the motive power, not of self-repression, but of self-assertion." "We too," some will assert, "must become fiery particles, bombinating in a world of unrest."

THE CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE

It is not in giving full rein to a strong will to power, but in a wholly different direction that we must look if mankind is to be saved. To the personal fate of the individual the prospect of the sudden dissolution of all things, when we view it calmly and steadily,

¹ Sheed & Ward, 7s. 6d.

makes less difference than we might on first thoughts suppose. For the individual life has always been hazardous. Every war has taken a heavy toll of youth. From the beginning of time succeeding generations have been cut down like the grass of the field. That a particular generation should die suddenly and together does not alter appreciably the sum of human experience.

Before looking at the Christian attitude to this contingency, we may note the reaction of one who has renounced the Christian hope. Mr. H. G. Wells has, for other reasons besides the atomic bomb, reached the conclusion that the end of everything we call life is close at hand and cannot be evaded. As he looks out at the world he sees, presaging the doom, frantic manifestations of fanaticism, panic, hysterical violence and cruelty. He knows no compelling argument to convince others that they should not be cruel or mean or cowardly. But for himself he "would rather our species ended its story in dignity, kindness and generosity, and not like drunken cowards in a daze, or poisoned rats in a sack. But this is a matter of individual predilection, for everyone to decide for himself."¹

But the Christian sees (or ought to see) things in another perspective. This world in which the atomic bomb and its terrifying possibilities fill so large a place, is not for him the sole reality. It is only that part of reality on which men have chosen in the modern age to concentrate their attention. It may be that, dazzled by the marvels of the material universe, men have for generations allowed themselves to be so wholly preoccupied with its interests that every other form of human experience seems unreal to them. It is possible that in this they may have made a fundamental mistake. It may be that, as Christianity asserts, man's true life has its centre elsewhere. If it does, the discovery that the pursuit of temporal wealth and power turns in the end to dust and ashes may prepare the way for a new understanding that the deepest roots of man's existence are found in his relation to the Infinite and Eternal.

For Christians, though they have often forgotten it, this earthly life has always been a pilgrimage. But the Christian hope does not lie wholly in the future. Even in this temporal existence man's life derives its significance from his relation to God. His spiritual life is the prime reality. Those who, like the saints, have found this to be true, and who know God as their refuge and strength, have no cause to fear even though the earth be removed.

But what about the fate of civilization? Can that be a matter of indifference to Christians? Can they, hugging the prospect of their own survival in another world, regard with equanimity the

¹ *Mind at the End of its Tether*, Heinemann, 6s.

prospect of the destruction of all the fine fruits of human history and culture and the obliteration of those who might piece together the ruins ?

The Christian attitude is not, as in some of the great Eastern religions and in certain modern movements with a considerable following, a mystical withdrawal from the world and its concerns ; for Christians the world is God's creation and the sphere in which his will has to be fulfilled. The Christian attitude is equally far removed, on the other hand, from an uncritical and optimistic belief in the inevitability of progress and in man's capacity to create the world he wants. Many Christians have in prosperous days capitulated to this belief, but the faith itself is too deeply aware of the warp in human nature not to know that every achievement brings with it new dangers and contains potentialities of evil as well as of good. Christianity seeks to hold in continual tension time and eternity. Its hopes are not fixed on this world. Yet just for this reason, and because it believes that God has a purpose for man's temporal life, it has shown in the past, and may yet show in the future, the power to set in motion a boundless impulse to *activity* on earth. Man is, in a sense, the saviour of creation. Christians must accept and discharge that responsibility. We have no right to lose our nerve. Even though we know that it is not in our power to avert catastrophe, we have our task to perform in faithfulness and confidence. It is worth remembering that the foundations of Christendom were laid by men who were convinced that the world would not last.

One of our members writes : " Being free from the world in the sense that our hopes are not involved with the uncertainties of its temporal future, and yet not detached from it in the sense of having fled to another world of timeless perfection, we should be just the people to deal with it coolly and discerningly. We should have the wisdom and liberty of the Stoic without his grimness, and the joy of the humanist without his anxieties and disillusionments. How far this is from the actual condition of Christian people we all know."

The Christian attitude thus understood is of immense significance in relation to the crisis in which we are living. But whether it becomes significant in fact depends on the content we put into it. That is what we have to do.

OUR IMMEDIATE TASKS

To what tasks have we, as Christians, to address ourselves on the threshold of the new era of atomic power ? There are at least four which stare us in the face.

First, we have, as Christians, to do what lies in our power to prevent war. Some aspects of this subject are dealt with in our Supplement. It looks at the moment as though the factors which are likely to be determinative in the immediate future are not particularly susceptible to direct influence by Christian opinion. But the Church has to be ready, if God should be pleased to use its contribution for the fulfilment of his will for mankind.

Secondly, there is the immediate task of saving Europe. We have written about this in the News-Letter and will continue to keep it before our readers. The point to fix clearly in our minds is the statement which the Foreign Secretary made a few weeks ago that hunger and privation may bring about a loss as terrific as the devastation caused by atomic bombs. There may be little that we can do immediately to avert this latter calamity; a roused and determined public opinion might do something to prevent the former. There lies a clear Christian duty.

Thirdly, the release of atomic energy and all that it portends compels us to face in a new way the place and function of science in modern society. Where is scientific discovery taking us? As Earl Russell said in the House of Lords, the crucial question, if we take a long view of the future of mankind, is whether a scientific society can continue to exist or whether it must inevitably destroy itself. This is clearly a major question.

It can only be taken effectively in hand, if we see its practical implications and its real magnitude. The relation of science to life can be considered fruitfully only if scientists participate in the discussion. There is just as little to be gained by religious groups discussing the place and function of science in the absence of scientists as there would be in the discussion of an engineering project in the absence of engineers. The first steps to be taken must be directed to bringing about a real exchange of thought between teachers of religion and scientists, and indeed between those who have been educated in the humanities and those whose outlook has been formed by science and technology. Prior to the question of the relation between religion and science is the practical question of the relations between Churchmen and scientists.

If we turn for guidance to those who have seen the problem most clearly, it is evident that a double approach to it is necessary. On the one hand, the Church must make up its mind what is the Christian attitude towards the creative possibilities of man's nature. This is an issue which has never been adequately faced by the Christian mind. It has to make its full reckoning with the marvel and grandeur of the achievements of recent centuries. What place in God's purpose is to be assigned to man's astonishing capacity to discover, to invent, to create? If the exercise of these high gifts

threatens to involve us in destruction, the fault may lie in no small part with the Church itself through its failure to interpret and sanctify man's creative powers.

On the other hand, the question must be asked and deeply probed whether the scientific approach to life is, as many believe to-day, the only approach to reality, or one of several, and perhaps not the most important ; and consequently, whether the concentration of attention and energy on exploring the secrets and controlling the forces of the material universe is not by its one-sidedness the real cause of the mess in which we find ourselves.

It may be that we need, as Mr. Philip Mairet has insisted in the *New English Weekly*, to distinguish far more clearly than is commonly done between two quite different attitudes and activities represented in scientific and technological advance—the one a spiritual activity, born of the desire to know wonderful things and akin to religion, and the other based on the assumption that in science we have the only real knowledge and that utility and power are its only objects.

That seems to be the choice which mankind must make if it is to escape destruction. Science for the sake of knowledge, for the love of truth—that is part of the worship of God. Science as a means of ministering to human needs and ameliorating the human lot and enlarging human possibilities—that also Christians must welcome with open arms. But science as a blind pursuit of the enhancement of the power at men's disposal without prior consideration of the ends for which it will be used and of men's capacity to use it rightly—that may prove the road to disaster. Unless and until these fundamental questions have been faced and answered, what some of our leading scientists, prompted by the strongest social sympathies, are demanding—a second industrial revolution based on scientific organization and the widest scientific education and supported by lavish government expenditure—may for all their excellent intentions only precipitate catastrophe. The question which needs to be pressed home is whether there is any hope of salvation for mankind except in learning to distinguish between the knowledge which aims at power and the wisdom which understands the true ends of life. Man through his pride, as the Greeks knew, may destroy himself. He is safe only in the knowledge of his finitude.

Fourthly, if the fundamental error is to treat the world perceived by our senses with its day to day happenings as though it were the whole of reality, then the task of all of us is to regain and strengthen our hold on the life of the Spirit, which consists in living intercourse with God and human persons, and so to rescue human life from its disastrous one-sidedness and restore its true balance.

A COMMISSION OF THE CHURCHES

We are glad that the British Council of Churches has at the instance of the Archbishop of Canterbury set up a Commission on the New Era of Atomic Power. The Chairman is J. H. Oldham. The Council of the Christian Frontier has readily consented to his giving a substantial part of his time to the task and has promised all the assistance in its power. The other members of the Commission are the Rev. M. E. Aubrey, Professor John Baillie, R. Birley (Headmaster of Charterhouse), the Bishop of Chichester, Principal R. Newton Flew, the Rev. Norman Goodall, Kenneth Grubb, Canon Cyril Hudson, Donald MacKinnon, Sir Walter Moberly, Dennis Routh and Mrs. Stocks (Principal of Westfield College). Consultations are taking place with scientists with a view to the addition of one or two of their number to the membership of the Commission. It is holding its first meeting during the week-end preceding the date of this News-Letter.

THE SUPPLEMENT

We are glad to have the opportunity of publishing as a Supplement a recent address (slightly abbreviated) made by Mr. John Foster Dulles at a dinner honouring the inauguration of Dr. Henry P. van Dusen to the Presidency of Union Theological Seminary, New York. Mr. Dulles is the Chairman of the Commission on a Just and Durable Peace, set up early in the war by the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America. He has taken a prominent part in American public affairs and accompanied Mr. Byrnes to the Conference of Foreign Ministers in London. His exceptionally wide knowledge of international affairs and his position as Chairman of a Commission to which the American Churches look for guidance in these matters lend a special interest to what he says.

Yours sincerely,

Kathleen Bliss

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THE ATOMIC BOMB AND MORAL LAW

By JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Out in Tennessee there is a plant which turns out bombs. Here we have a plant which turns out ministers of the Gospel. The two seem remote and unrelated. Actually, the issue of our time, perhaps the issue of all human time, is which of the two outputs will prevail.

THE LESSONS OF THE PAST

Too much these days we forget that men's ability to control the physical depends upon the moral. Nothing that statesmen can contrive will work if it does not reflect the moral conscience of the time. Whenever that limitation is ignored, failure ensues. We need to recall that now, when many are panicky and demand something that, on paper at least, will seem to give them security. That is the state of mind which led to the two Hague Peace Conferences of 1899 and 1907. Then, as now, men had become alarmed lest the developments of science should greatly increase the destructiveness of war. There was widespread fear of new weapons. So the First Hague Peace Conference was called for the purpose of forbidding the employment of "new fire arms of every description and of new explosives" and also to prohibit "the discharge of any kind of projectile or explosive from balloons or by similar means" or the use of "submarine or diving torpedo boats" or "warships armed with rams." That effort to limit the destructiveness of war was, of course, a total failure. When war occurs, nations avail themselves of any weapon which they think will make the difference between victory and defeat. Until governments take a totally different conception of the moral sanctity of contracts in time of war, it is folly to believe that the destructiveness of war can be limited by agreements not to use certain weapons. That was a lesson which was taught by the Hague Peace Conference.

Following the Hague Conference came the League of Nations. Thereby the members undertook to respect and preserve the territorial integrity and political independence of all members of the League. Disregard of that Covenant, it was provided, should *ipso facto* be deemed an act of war against all other members of the League who undertook to carry out sanctions against the Covenant-breaking state. Again that political arrangement failed because it depended upon agreements which, at the time at least, were artificial in that they did not reflect the moral judgment of the world. Many felt that it was actually immoral to identify peace with perpetuation of the *status quo*, particularly the status created by the Treaty of Versailles. The United States found the arrangement so objectionable that it did not accept at all. Those states which did become members of the League never took their engagements seriously. The League covenants never emerged from the paper stage, because they did not embody the moral judgment of the time.

There followed the Kellogg-Briand Pact. That was an even more ambitious effort to produce results by the stroke of a pen. Thereby, all the nations undertook to renounce war as an instrument of national policy. That agreement carried to the ultimate the fallacy that great reforms can be wrought by paper agreements. That Pact proved only a delusion and a snare to those who relied thereon.

THE UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATION

Now, we have the United Nations Organization. Many were disappointed by its Charter because they felt it did not go far enough. It contains no great declaration abolishing war. It imposes no unlimited commitments upon the member states. It does not guarantee to preserve the *status quo*. It seeks, in those respects, to apply the lessons taught by the failure of the League of Nations and of the Kellogg-Briand Pact.

The Charter limits itself to establishing the kind of an organization which there was reason to believe might actually work, given the moral environment in which it would have to work. There is a Security Council which, to be sure, is hobbled by the veto power. That may make it a rather impotent body. But that veto power was an inevitable consequence of the fact that no one of the great powers trusted the others sufficiently to hand over to them control of its destiny. There is an Assembly which, however, has only the power to recommend. That again is because none of the nations wanted to subject itself to majority rule. The United States, for example, feared that the votes of others might be actuated, not by some high principle of justice, but by desire to exploit its economic resources. The Soviet Union feared that the votes of others might be actuated by antipathy to its communistic system. These are two of the many prejudices and distrusts which were realities. Those realities made inevitable a World Organization which lacks the political powers commonly relied on to preserve the peace. That is too bad. But the task of statesmanship is to relate theory to reality. Political institutions ought to be as perfect as is consonant with their vigorous survival in the existing environment. Also, of course, those institutions ought to contain within themselves the possibility of improving the environment and thereby making more perfection possible. The United Nations Charter has that great merit. It does not accept as permanent the existing distrusts. It charges the nations, under the leadership of the General Assembly, to work together on tasks of human welfare. The assumption, and the reasonable assumption, is that if they do that, fellowship between nations will grow. Then the Charter proposes that, at the end of ten years, there will be a general conference to review and amend the Charter. The theory is that by that time the moral environment of the world can have improved to a point which will permit of a more adequate political institution.

Into that programme, planned at San Francisco, there has now been thrown the atomic bomb. That has led many to lose interest in the programme of San Francisco, as inadequate. They demand some new formula which will quickly provide them with absolute security against this new menace. It is, for example, proposed that there should

be an agreement whereby the nations will agree, in some form, not to use this new weapon. Any such agreement in relation to the atomic bomb would be bound to fail, as such agreements have always failed in relation to new weapons. It can be taken as absolutely certain that, in the event of another major war, the parties will, if they can, use atomic energy, any agreement to the contrary notwithstanding.

Others, recognizing the fallibility of such national agreements, propose that we should, in effect, abolish national governments, at least as bodies having the right to maintain military establishments. We should create, it is said, a single world body which will possess overwhelming military power, including exclusive power to use atomic energy. It should, by force, keep to itself that monopoly of power. It is said that such a world organ which was found impractical at San Francisco, has now become possible because of the new element of fear which has arisen.

That reasoning, I believe, is not sound. Nothing has happened to do away with the mistrusts which limited what the San Francisco Conference could do. Indeed, the degree of our present fear measures the depth of our distrust.

THE CENTRAL PROBLEM

The problem to-day remains the same problem as we encountered at San Francisco. That is, the problem of how to create a monopoly of world force without creating tyranny. Force, unless it is harnessed to law, is tyranny. There are, perhaps, a few who are so frightened that they would accept tyranny in the hope of thereby increasing their chance of survival. Those are, however, very few. Most are still unwilling to subject themselves to the power of others unless they know that that power will be harnessed to law. The central problem is how to get world law. Once we can agree upon a law-making body, then it will be possible to put overwhelming force behind it. However, it is not possible to have a law-making body until there is greater trust and confidence between the peoples of the world; until there is more widespread acceptance and practice of democratic methods; and until there is more nearly a common moral judgment of what is right and wrong.

There is no political short cut to the safety men want. We must carry through the programme of San Francisco. We must use the United Nations Organization to bring about that greater trust and fellowship we need before we can have any world government that will work.

NEXT STEPS

Such a programme does not, of course, mean a "do nothing" policy with reference to atomic energy. On the contrary, it calls for this new matter being dealt with, in accordance with the philosophy of San Francisco, so as to provide trust and fellowship among the nations of the world. There is danger that, unless we act quickly in this spirit, distrust may increase. The United States must not give the impression that it wants to preserve a monopoly of atomic "know

how " at least long enough to increase our bargaining power in these pending negotiations. At London the United States delegation stood for high moral principles, as we saw them. Those principles cut across, at many points, the desires of others. It will not be easy to secure their application. We shall need to get power behind those principles. But the power that we want is the power of world opinion, not of atomic energy. Any thought that we want the latter would wholly destroy our moral influence in the world and seriously set back the possibility of developing the greater fellowship we need. We should make it clear that we are prepared to subject our atomic knowledge to the dictates of the same world opinion that we would invoke in favour of other post-war settlements. We have set up a General Assembly to be the "town meeting of the world." Let us invite, and heed, its judgment of what we should do.

I have no idea what the Assembly would recommend and it is not of primary importance. What is most important is that we accept a procedure which shows that we really mean it when we say that we are merely a trustee of atomic power. If we are trustees for the world, then we will not decide alone what we shall do. That procedure will not enhance trust and fellowship.

I realize that such a programme as I here outline will not satisfy the many who are panicky and the many who are impatient. They want to be shown a formula for quick and absolute security. It would be easy to write one. It would be impossible to write one that would work. There is no short cut. There is no mechanistic solution. It is not possible by a stroke of the pen to make up for accumulated moral deficiencies. What is possible is to increase steadily the acceptance and practice of the moral law. If we do that, then many other things will become possible.

When I talk along this line, it is often replied that I am impractical and idealistic and that we cannot wait for results until the whole world has become evangelized or at least has become highly moral. Such comment merely shows that I have failed to make my meaning clear. To rely upon the force of the moral law is the most practical thing in the world to-day. It is general acceptance of the moral law which gives us 99 per cent. of the practical security which we enjoy. There is nothing impractical about attempting to extend the system which practically gives us protection.

If the post-war trend is toward increased fellowship and increasing trust and confidence, then that itself will bring us a large measure of protection as a by-product. So long as the trend is in that direction, nations do not interrupt it to wipe each other out with atomic bombs. It is when the trend is toward increased distrust that we need to be afraid.

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